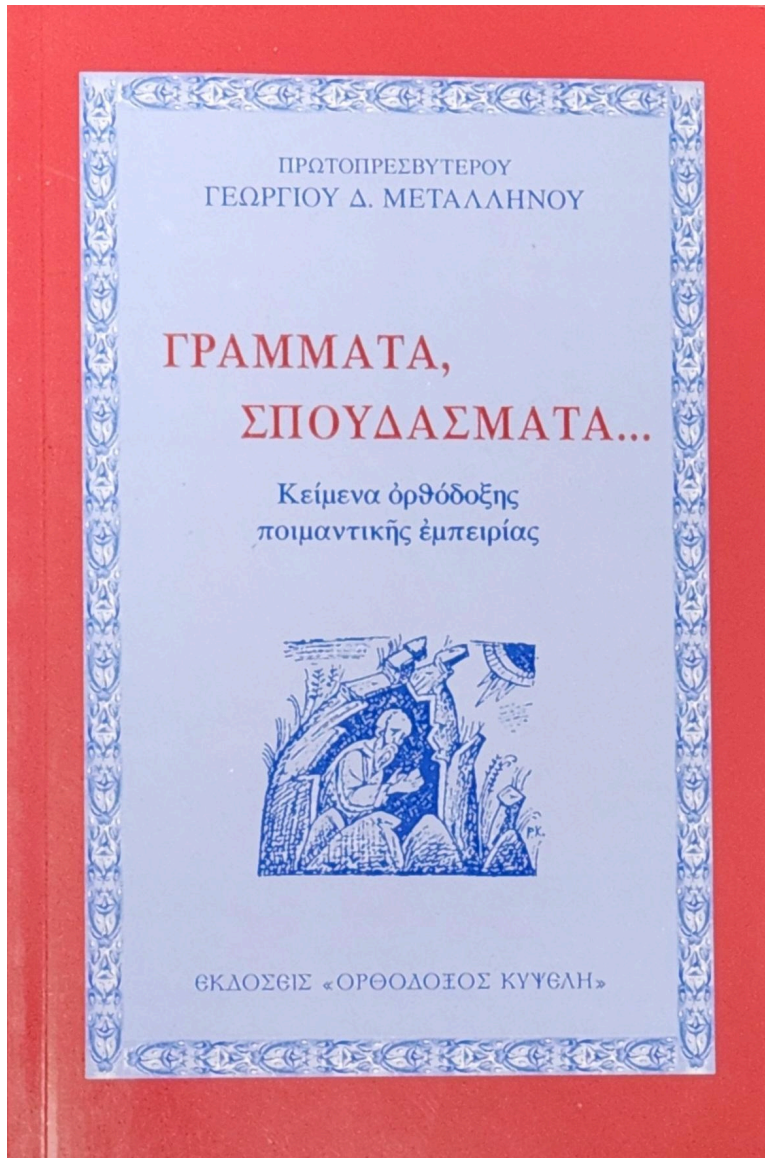


AND YET! ROMANIA LIVES

Protopresbyter George D. Metallinos



In the 4th century A.D., a completely new state entity appeared in history, and with it, a new world was born. It is the empire of New Rome, or as it is already called from the 4th century, Romania. At the boundary of the renewal of the empire, the Great Constantine moves the capital (Old Rome, a Greek city as well) to the East. Thus, New Rome will be named in his honour, Constantinople. The Roman Empire was transformed into “the polity named after Christ.” At the same time, a new consciousness and new political ideology are shaped. It is the imperial idea for the progressive incorporation of all the world's peoples into the Christian Faith. The pillars of the empire of New Rome were the Roman world and the new political ideology, Christianity as

patristic Orthodoxy, and Hellenism (language, culture, education). This is expressed in the well-known hymn of Saint Kassiani: “The cities of the world passed under one single rule, and the nations came to believe in one sovereign Godhead.” The Christian faith is the binding element of the entire empire, and this is distorted by heresy, which has not only a theological but also a political character.

The main element of the empire is the harmonious hierarchy of nationality (awareness of lineage) in supra-nationality. The racial element did not affect the unity of an ecclesiastical body. Moreover, the Saints were true leaders, and the supreme ideal was not political power or worldly wisdom but holiness as deification. For this reason, studying “Byzantium”/Romania without knowledge of Theology is impossible.

The heart of the empire was Hellenism (language, education, culture). From Justinian (6th century) to Heraclius (7th century), the state administration (Neares) also Hellenizes. The Latin language recedes (in the East), and in the bilingualism of the empire (Latin and Greek), the emphasis falls on Greek. The supranational union within Orthodoxy leads to the universal nation (“holy nation,” 1 Peter 2:9), the “Nation of the Romans,” the Orthodox citizens of the empire, a Christian commonwealth with the Holy Table of Hagia Sophia being the absolute centre. It is the kinship in Christ or all-encompassing kinship of the Citizens of New Rome, Romans, Neo-Romans (from the City) and, more simply, Rum. St. Constantine laid the foundation for the concept of the Nation, encompassing all the Orthodox peoples of the empire. This unity would survive even after two conquests (the Frankish one in 1204 and the Ottoman one in 1453). However, the unified, universal consciousness of the Rum (Orthodox citizens of New Rome) would be undermined by Frankish propaganda for their westernisation. The identification of nationality with language is not recognised in Romania. Western Europeans imposed this in the 19th century. The European scandal, however, is not absent, which disrupts this mentality! The Swiss speak three languages, French, German, and Italian, but nationally they are only Swiss. Romaiika (simple Greek) was the common language of the empire until the 19th century and ensured its unity.

With the common faith, Orthodoxy, the common worship, the common spiritual life, and the common canonical order, the unity of the Orthodox peoples of the empire continued without abolishing national identities (awareness of origin) within the Christ-established hyper-ethnicity. Nationalism, as ethnicism, with an emphasis on nationality, would develop after 1204 and peak in the 19th century. The national (nationalistic) idea will be cultivated from the end of the 18th century (Enlightenment, schooling). Thus, the Balkan nationalisms prospered, with immediate consequences for the ecclesiastical autocephaly (dissolution of the Roman unity), the dissolution of the ethnarchy, and the empire of New Rome, which continued within it. In 1872, an ecumenical council in Constantinople condemned “ethno-phyletism” (its entry into the Faith) as heresy. The unity of Romania and the continuity of the universal Roman idea is ensured within

the boundaries of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Whenever and wherever the Patristic spirit prevails, the ecclesiastical space remains always faithful to the in-Christ universality and the unity of the Romans-Romioi-Orthodox. Wherever the worldly mentality prevails, a morbid nationalism (racialism) dominates there.

With the survival of the ethnarchies of its conquered territories, Romania (the empire) lives: the Ethnarchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, of Antioch, of Jerusalem, and the Church of Cyprus. The jurisdiction of these ethnarchic centres has preserved and continues to preserve the geographical expanse of Romania in terms of territorial and jurisdictional rights. The preservation and continuation of the Orthodoxy of the Saints and the patristic spirit also spiritually saves Romania, despite the times and any changes occurring. This was strongly proclaimed by the blessed Fr. John Romanides. And he was right!

Translated from the original Greek:

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